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JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY

There's a society in the U.S. so fierce and frenzied in its anti-communism campaign that even the federal government in Washington is disturbed.

It is known as the John Birch Society. Its founder and leader is Robert Welch of Belmont, Mass. Welch, 51, retired from a candy firm four years ago to devote his life to fighting communism.

Originally the Society functioned with considerable secrecy but bitter condemnation of its tactics has forced the organization into the open.

One aim of the society would be to impeach Chief Justice Warren of the Supreme Court. Welch has also declared that former President Eisenhower, the late State Secretary Dulles and Central Intelligence Agency Chief Allen Dulles had been duped by the Communists.

It is the attack on such distinguished names as Warren, Eisenhower and Dulles that has caused concern both in Congress and Attorney General Kennedy's office. The U.S. Justice Department, however, refuses to reveal whether or not it is investigating the organization.

It develops that at least two congressmen are members of the John Birch Society. Rep. Hiestand, R-Calif., admits membership and says a federal investigation would be welcomed. He conceded some members might be extremists but defended the purpose as "violent and emphatic anti-Communist." Rep. Rousselot, R-Calif., also admitted membership but said the society's chapters in his area were basically study groups and "not arm-waving people who run around harassing others."

Welch also welcomes an investigation and has wired the Senate Internal Security Committee to that effect. He declares the "only crime" of the society is to fight communism.

Perhaps, the real American viewpoint is expressed by FBI Director Hoover who condemns "vigilante action" by Americans opposed to communism. He says that Communists stand to gain from any rift created by people who engage in reckless charges against one another. "There is above all the danger of irresponsible counteraction by citizens who lend impetus to communism through inept attempts to fight this insidious menace."

The John Birch Society would do well to heed Hoover's words.